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The national question in the Russian Duma

London

1915

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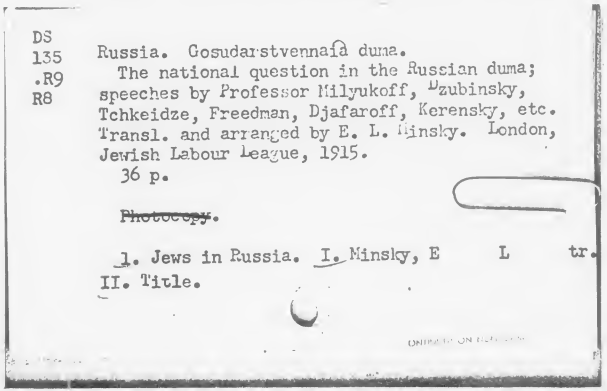

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IN THE

Russian Duma

SPEECHES

By Professor Miliyukoff, Dzubinsky, Tchkeidze,
Freedman, Djaf.roff, Kerensky
Etc., Etc.

TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED BY

E. L. MINSKY

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12a, Colchester St., Commercial Rd.
LONDON, E.
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The pamphlet which is now offered to the public represents a selection of speeches which were delivered in the recent session of the Duma on various dates in August and September last.

The speeches were published in the leading Russian papers and the present translation was made from the *Retch* and from the *Den*.

The speeches need no comment: they speak for themselves. They throw sufficient light upon the national question in Russia and in particular upon the position of the Jews. In this connection it should be noted that, with the exception of Freedman and Bomash, the speakers are not Jews.

Appended to the pamphlet is a speech delivered at the Imperial Council (Upper Chamber) by Baron R. R. Rosen, former Russian Ambassador at Washington.

The second appendix is a note by the translator on the recent Extension of the Pale of Jewish Settlement.

The footnotes in the pamphlet are by the translator.

October, 1915.

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DUMA SESSION,

1st August (19th July, Russian Style), 1915.

Professor M. MILYUKOFF
(Leader, Constitutional Democratic Party).

It is the third time we meet here since the commencement of the war. On the first occasion the people sent us here with a mandate to express the high patriotic feelings which animated all nationalities, social groups, and political currents of thought in Russia. You all remember the great historical session of the 26th of July of last year. Six months later, in January, we came here with a feeling of patriotic anxiety. We have kept this feeling within ourselves, but we told the Government at the secret sittings all that was troubling the people's mind. The answer we received was not satisfactory; the substance of it was that the Government will manage without our advice and without our co-operation. We are meeting now on the anniversary of the great trials of our country. Unfortunately the patriotic anxiety felt by the people's representatives proved to be justified. Things hidden have come out into the light, and all the assurances we have received from the Government proved nothing more than mere words. The country, however, cannot be satisfied with words, and the people want to take matters in their own hands and rectify the ommissions of the past. The people look upon us as a constitutional instrument for expressing their will, and they have now sent us here with a different mandate—to tell the Government the whole truth about the country, to ascertain the whole truth about the Government for the information of the country, and to accomplish all that was left undone by the Government.

The real cause of all the mistakes in the past was pointed out here—it is the anomalous relations existing between the people and the Government.

Unfortunately, the appeal from the Throne to forget internal feuds has not altered these anomalous relations. "Mistrust of the people, limited by fear," was the guiding idea of our internal policy. It seemed as if the Government was doing everything to pulverise popular enthusiasm. This policy gave rise for the accusation advanced against the ministers, who are now happily out of the Cabinet, of being pro-German. Instead of scrupulously adhering to the internal truce, the Government hastened to take advantage of the exceptional military conditions in order to make

more secure their purely party positions against which we fought in time of peace. "Political soundness" was the distinguishing mark according to which people and institutions were permitted to give their mind, their energy, and even their life for the country. The so-called "politically sound" were permitted to do so, while the others were not. Communication with the army, with the wounded, was suspected in advance and placed under strict supervision necessitating a voluminous departmental correspondence. The military authorities were dragged into civil affairs and disputes, and the attention of the army was diverted from its proper task. With such principles guiding the policy of the central authorities one can imagine what the position was in the provinces. I could give here a long and sad tale of arbitrary acts by governors—arbitrary, as usual, but more irritating than ever, because they were directed against the legitimate attempts of society to help their country in its hour of need.

Another violation of the internal truce was the policy adopted by the authorities towards certain nationalities. Here again, the party tendencies of the authorities were especially in evidence. The playing on the dark Chauvinistic instincts of the masses, with the usual policy of anti-Semiticism and persecution of all "non-Russians" and followers of other than the Orthodox Greek Church assumed unheard-of dimensions under cover of the military situation. In spite of the law of religious tolerance, Russian sectarians were persecuted for their religious beliefs, solely because some missionaries declared their religion to be the religion of the Germans. There was a naïve and foolish attempt upon the nationality and religion of the population of Galicia, which at the time had just been conquered. The scum of Russian officialdom was sent to administer Galicia. Apart from having estranged from us the Slavonic Ukrainian population of Galicia, these reptile officials have attempted to obscure the halo of this great war of liberation. Theirs was an attempt upon the ideal of the future independence of small nationalities which is animating ourselves and our Allies. As a bright spot on this dark background was the first official recognition of this great ideal—the manifesto issued by the Grand Duke to the Poles. But even here, the promise was sufficiently vague, and there was no fulfilment. Only to-day we have heard at last this desired and hitherto forbidden word, Autonomy. However, what I said pales before the deeds perpetrated upon the Jews. This unhappy people, animated at the beginning of the war by the general patriotic enthusiasm, has soon become an object of systematic mockery. I cannot, gentlemen, call by any other name the wholesale accusation of treachery of a whole people, an accusation which cannot be justified by isolated cases of espionage which were recorded among the population of all nationalities living on the frontier. Under the mask of military

requirements, unheard-of measures of corporate responsibility for uncommitted crimes were adopted—measures reminding one of the savage times of the dark ages, and lowering us in the esteem of the whole civilised world. Gentlemen, in these times, when States defend the freedom and rights of small nationalities against their oppressors, such facts are a crying dissonance, and give cause for sadness to friends and for joy to enemies. I am speaking now of the fate of our colleagues of the Duma, the members of the Social Democratic Fraction of the Bolsheviks. Gentlemen, I was present at the trial engineered by the former Minister of Justice, whose name will go down in history as a symbol of Russian injustice. I can bear witness, that not only was there no treason in their case, but, what the trial revealed was just the contrary. The accused had rejected a formula sent to them from abroad demanding the expression of a wish that Russia should be defeated. The members of the Duma have substituted this formula by another of a stereotyped party character. When I left the court, after three days, I experienced a feeling of relief, that even on this pole of our social life there was no one who wished to see our country defeated. The court, however, sent our colleagues into exile, not for treason, of which there was none, but for their supposed adherence to a party, whose representatives are sitting on the same bench as ourselves, and bear with us the same duties entrusted to them by their electors. In order to inspire afresh the people with enthusiasm, which had been so stupidly damped, I can see no other means but the immediate return into our midst of our colleagues, the exiled members of the Duma, and the extension of the measure adopted in respect of Burtzeff to the whole category of persons condemned for political offences. . . .

A. F. KERENSKY

(Leader, Peasant Group of Toil).

. . . After a year of war we see before our eyes the Jews crucified by hatred and malicious slander

I declare from this platform that I went personally to Kuzhi, a little village in the province of Kovno, to investigate the charge made against the local Jews that they have treacherously, in co-operation with the Germans, attacked the Russian troops. On account of local conditions such a thing could not possibly have taken place. . . .

M. TCHKEIDZE

(Leader, Social Democratic Party).

I, and my political colleagues with me, and I believe anybody who does not wish to close his eyes upon present events, think that Russia is undergoing an acute and dangerous crisis, and if

she will not take a decided turn in her course, it may very well happen that the country will enter upon the road of complete ruin and the people on the road of complete degeneration. (Voices from the Right: "How terrible!") Whether terrible or not, this is our deep conviction, and we consider it our duty to say it aloud from this platform. Gentlemen, we have all demanded the summoning of the Imperial Duma in order that this question might be discussed. We must find out who are responsible for all that happened, and discover a way out of this situation. We have heard to-day what the representatives of the Government had to say upon this question. Whilst I listened to their speeches, the words spoken from this platform by the late Stolypin came back to my mind: "Great convulsions," he said, "is what you want, but what we want is a great Russia." I thought that it would be just suitable to address these very words to the Government. Indeed, great convulsions were necessary, before they stopped for one moment to think of the country's needs, not with the intention of satisfying them—far from it—but in order to chase them from their mind on the morrow. If you will trace back the events of the last two months you will notice that in the measure as defeats and calamities were accumulating, some changes were being affected, some shifting of scenery was going on, but which in reality meant no change at all. Gentlemen, we have heard to-day the opinion of the representatives of the various parties upon the question which I have now put. These opinions betray the fact that some of you, gentlemen, have learnt nothing from this year of war. On others, however, the lessons of the war have not been in vain: people begin to speak from this platform in the same language in which we spoke on the 26th July of last year.

What I have to tell the country at the present moment is, that the people first and most responsible for the present crisis of our country are the gentlemen occupying these seats (pointing to the Government benches). It is quite indifferent who occupied these seats yesterday and who is occupying them to-day. In spite of the shufflings within the Cabinet, the latter remains the same. And so I maintain that these gentlemen are responsible for the calamities which have befallen us and for the crisis in which our country is placed. They have done everything during this year of war to weaken, disorganise, and demobilise Russia. Permit me to give you only a few instances in support of my statement. From the very first moment when the war broke out the Russian working classes were literally terrorised. The Sick and Benefit Societies, quite legal institutions, were turned by the Government into a trap, and everybody acting as secretary to such society was sooner or later arrested. The Trade Unions were destroyed root and branch. The press was strangled at the very beginning of the war. The Government, however, did not

stop at that. These very people who always did have, and have even now, traitors like Miasoedoff in their midst, went hunting for traitors among the workers and their leaders, and whilst the Miasoedoffs and their protectors have been selling Russia at the back of the army, Tsheglovitoff's Court was passing sentence upon our Social Democratic members of the Duma and putting them in chains. And now quite recently, when the intolerable conditions of labour had compelled the workers to speak out about their needs, they were accused of treachery, and at Kostroma some workers were shot down and others were arrested. Gentlemen, after all that, after the shooting of Russian workers, who were not demanding a Constituent Assembly, but a paltry penny rise—(Voices from the Right: "Impossible!")—Impossible! Very well, to-morrow we are introducing an interpellation on the subject, and shall prove with facts in hand that we are speaking the very truth. After all this, I ask you, how dare you speak of unity with the workers? And mark you, such treatment is meted out to the workers at a time when colossal profits are flowing into the pockets of the Russian capitalists. You speak of unity! But what about the treatment meted out to another class of Russian subjects whose position in many respects resembles that of the workers. I mean the Jewish population numbering some six millions of people. The Jews, like the working classes in Russia, are so situated that they have nothing to lose, save chains, prison, summary execution, and gallows. The leaders of the workers are being cast in prison in order to be subjected to torture, and leading members of Jewish communities in Russia are being taken as hostages by the Russian authorities. Was there ever a Government so cynical as to take hostages from their own subjects? I declare that this has no precedent in history. (Interruption from the Right: "Spies!") Before speaking of espionage among the Jews you must not forget your own Miasoedoffs. (Voice from the Right: "Miasoedoff was hanged.") Well, there are probably plenty still left. Gentlemen, we have heard to-day about autonomy for Poland. Autonomy is spoken of now, but hitherto what did this loudly promised autonomy amount to? It was nothing more than the most disgusting Polish Town Corporations Bill one could imagine!

And what about the incitement against Russian subjects of German origin? I do not mean our Germans in high places—nobody dare touch them—what I mean is the plain, ordinary man. You know that this incitement had resulted in an ugly pogrom in Moscow, not only with the connivance of the authorities but actually through their initiative.

Further still, what about unity in the Caucasus? The principle of "divide and rule" has been systematically applied to the Caucasus. This territory is now one of the theatres of war,

and who do you think is at the head of the Administration? Not the Viceroy Count Vorontzoff-Dashkoff, who is ill, but his wife. I say this openly, and let everybody know it. (Voices from the Right: "What!" Laughter.) You may laugh, of course, and then people say that somebody is playing into the hands of the Germans, whilst a whole territory in the military zone is being governed by an old woman of 80; and in the Batum province at the head of the Administration is ——— (name deleted by Censor), that very man who some time ago had gained notoriety in Persia. You know him, no doubt; at least, you have heard of him. He is practising wholesale extermination of the local population, carrying out at the same time a policy of peopling these regions with new-comers.

On the 27th January last the representatives of the Moslem Group declared from this platform that the Government is even now deeply wounding the religious and national feelings of the Moslems. The fate of Swinhufvud, who was exiled, and the fate of other Finns who are visited with penalties by the Government, are a constant reminder to the Finnish citizens of the worth of the Finnish Constitution and of Finnish autonomy. In the name of "unity" what have your authorities done in Galicia? The army had hardly time to tread upon the soil of Galicia when the Russian Administration, with M. Gregus at its head and with the protection of Count Bobrinsky and Chikhacheff, members of the Duma, who, I believe, are now present, commenced introducing the elements of real Russian rule in this province, and to the anxious enquiries of the Galician Jews as to their ultimate fate, the cynical reply was, that by behaving loyally they might expect to be put on an equal footing with the Jews in Russia! . . . In the name of the same unity, the authorities have not only persevered in their persecution of the politicals, but the position of the latter in the places of their exile became worse. Now about religious tolerance. Even in the present critical time the Government cannot leave in peace the millions of sectarians in Russia, but continues to persecute them as heretofore. As to freedom of the press, the authorities have, from the very beginning of the war, allowed all the Black Hundred sheets to carry on, without let or hindrance, an open pogrom agitation; on the other hand, the editors of the Labour press and their staff were put into prison; even the Capitalist press was placed in the position of which the leader of the Constitutional Democrats spoke here to-day. As regards freedom of meetings, the democracy was denied even a fraction of such freedom. In the name of the same "unity," the Government tightened its arbitrary administrative rule, its bureaucratic tutelage, and police interference, and has thus destroyed all harmony in the economic life of the country, introducing a reign of chaos and disorganisation.

The authorities were busy all the time strengthening their

old positions, considering all other questions as of a passing, if any, interest at all. Here, gentlemen, is the fundamental cause which is responsible for the position in which our country finds itself at the present moment. It would, however, be unjust and one-sided to throw all the blame on the Government. At the risk of being reproached for siding with M. Menshikoff,* who recently said that the responsibility in the present case falls not only on the Government, but also on the Imperial Duma, I must say that the Fourth Imperial Duma was, on the whole, at one with the Government. Not only the Reactionaries, but even our Imperialists from the Capitalist classes, and a considerable portion of the Radical Russian Intelligentsia (Intellectuals) have considered union with the Government a fountain of new strength. The Fourth Duma has undertaken in co-operation with the Government, and within the limits of the present *régime*, the solution of problems which demand the most serious attention and the taxing to the utmost of all the creative forces of the country. The results must be faced fairly and squarely. The country has been landed into a highly critical and calamitous position, in which, however, a great country cannot remain for long. Russia will find its way out from this position, and the only way is the unchaining and unfettering of Russia and its thorough democratisation.

DUMA SESSION,

2nd August (20th July, Russian Style), 1915.

M. DJAFAROFF (Moslem Group).

In spite of the serious events and the important problems of State which demand internal peace and unity in face of the threatening danger, the Government is continuing to practise upon Mohammedans and non-Russian nationalities generally a policy which has nothing in common with the rational interests of the State.

In Trans-Caucasia this policy has found its expression in open incitement against non-Russian nationalities in provinces either immediately affected by military operations or situated in the rear of the Caucasian front. Here, behind the roar of battle, horrible things have been and are being perpetrated on the utterly helpless peaceful Moslem population. Its life and property are in jeopardy. The extortions, robbery, and murder of Moslems have

* Reactionary publicist and contributor to the *Novoe Vremya*.

become a matter of everyday occurrence. Wholesale expulsions of the male population, violation of the unprotected women left behind, ruined and devastated villages, an impoverished, hungry, terror-stricken, and unprovided-for population—this is the position of the Moslems in the country. We are in possession of facts and official data confirming every word I said, but we find it impossible to give them publicity here. In due time we shall speak about them again. For the present we shall only remark that the local and central authorities have been placed in possession of the facts, but nevertheless, nothing was changed in the position of the Moslems. At a time when the liberation and the protection of the nationalities beyond the frontiers of Russia were declared to be one of the aims of this war, at a time when our sons and brothers are shedding their blood for these aims, their helpless co-religionists at home on the Caucasian front are being terrorised. How will such a policy and such an attitude towards a portion of the Moslem population influence all the Russian Moslems, and what feelings will it raise in them?

Non-Russian peoples were always treated with scorn in Russia, and the fact was ignored that Russia is a State composed of many nationalities, and that in numbers the Moslems occupy the second place in the Empire. Such a policy, I repeat, which is always harmful from the point of view of the healthy interests of the State, is especially injurious and dangerous now when the extraordinary conditions imperatively demand from the authorities the adoption of measures calculated to unite and weld together all the forces of the country for its defence. True to their duty towards their country the Moslems will continue to stand by Russia and defend its integrity. They are, however, of the opinion that complete unity of all the forces of the country is necessary before a successful termination of the war can be achieved. Such unity will only be attained when all the hindrances—like the state of affairs reigning at the Batum and Kars provinces and affecting the Moslem population—will be swept away.

M. FREEDMAN
(Jewish Member for Kovno).

On this anniversary of the war, when our great country voices its determination to fight to a finish, when all the living forces of the land are being mobilised, due attention should be given to the mobilisation of the people's spirit, that collective spirit which is the embodiment of all the nationalities of Russia who were drawn together in one great effort at imperial unity. From this point of view every nationality deserves particular attention. Turning to the position of the Jews in the country, to the sufferings they have undergone and to the sufferings which are yet in store for them, let me state first of all that, in spite of their hapless

position, in spite of the disabilities from which they suffer, the Jews have risen to the great heights of citizenship, and have played a prominent part in the war. Not only have they sent all their available recruits but, what is more, they have sent to the war their only-sons. True, this was imposed on them by a special decree of the Government, but the fact remains that whereas in the case of all the other nationalities inhabiting Russia, only-sons were exempted from military service, Jewish only-sons were taken to the war. In the early months of the war the papers have recorded the fact that a considerable number of Jews have enrolled in the army as volunteers. These were young men who by education had a title to the rank of officers. They knew, however, that as Jews they were debarred from commissions in the army—nevertheless they went to the war.

The Jewish youths who, on account of the educational restrictions affecting Jews, were denied the possibility of studying in Russia and were compelled to study abroad, returned to Russia or joined the Allied forces. A considerable number of Russo-Jewish students had lost their lives in the defence of Liège in Belgium and other places on the Western front. Even those whom fortune had driven out from home and who had found shelter beyond the seas have returned to Russia. The Zionist youths who had settled in the ancient Jewish country of Palestine, when placed before the dilemma whether to become Turkish subjects or be expelled from Palestine, preferred the latter and left for Alexandria, where they had formed a special contingent and joined the British Army.

The Jews, as well as all the other peoples of Russia, have built hospitals, have contributed money and goods, and have assisted in every public undertaking to help the army. At the front the Jewish soldier has proved that he can fight as valiantly as anybody else. Numerous Jewish soldiers distinguished themselves at the war. The statistical data in our hands show that the Jewish losses at the front were not less than the losses of other nationalities. The percentage of Jewish losses is 4.9, the percentage of Jewish killed is 4.11, whereas the Jewish population is only 4.05. Thus, proportionately, the Jewish share of losses is above the due percentage.

I have before me a letter by a Jewish emigrant who returned from the States to fight for Russia. He writes: "I have risked my life in travelling back to Russia *via* Archangel. I did it because I loved Russia more than life and more than the freedom I enjoyed in America. Upon my arrival I was accepted for military service, and have lost in battle my arm almost up to the shoulder. I was sent to the province of Courland, and when I reached Riga I met at the station my mother and my relatives, who were on that very day driven out from their homes by the decree of the military authorities. . . . Tell the gentlemen who are sitting on the

Right benches that it is not the loss of my arm that grieves me, but it is the loss of human dignity which I have enjoyed in America."

This was the spirit which animated the Jews, and which found expression in patriotic demonstrations, in the Jewish press, and finally in this House of the people's representatives. Now, what was the Government's answer to these patriotic manifestations? One would have thought that the Government would introduce some measures to lighten the burden of the Jews who were in the very centre of military operations. Instead of that the policy of oppression and persecution was pursued with greater force than ever. Jews and Jewesses, whose husbands, sons, and brothers were shedding their blood for the country, were being driven out from their homes. For instance, at Lizka, a village in the district of Rechitz, a Jewish bootmaker, who lived there for the last ten years and whose three sons were fighting in the army, was expelled from the village. Alexander Rozlikoff, a wounded Jewish soldier, came to Kharkoff for treatment, but on his passport was marked "to be sent out." Private Godlevsky, whose leg was amputated and who was being treated at Rostoff-on-Don, was about to be expelled to his native town Kalish (at that time already in the hands of the Germans). Only thanks to the intervention of the Zemstvo Union was he left in peace. An apothecary's assistant, who was wounded at the war, was not permitted to go to a hospital in Petrograd, and only after repeated petitions was he allowed to stay in Petrograd for not more than two months. You will agree that all this is a disgrace and a crying shame. True, immediately afterwards a circular was sent out by the Minister of the Interior to the effect, that families of Jewish soldiers on active service may remain at their places of domicile. This circular, however, refers to the families of wounded soldiers, but does not include the wounded soldiers themselves. This circular is in itself an illuminating illustration of the methods of our legislation. I must also refer to the attitude of the Government towards the Jewish press. Only the other day a decree was issued ordering the suppression of all the Jewish papers, and the masses of the Jewish people are denied the possibility of learning the news of the day. (Interruption from the Right: "Let them read Russian.") M. Freedman: There are many Jews who are unable to read Russian. Have you permitted them to educate themselves? Take, for instance, the policy of the Ministry of Education. Formerly, if a Jewish scholar had high marks or was lucky at the "lot-drawing," he could gain admittance to a Government school; now, however, the condition of admittance is the incident of having a father or brother killed or wounded on the battlefield.

"We have heard yesterday from the Prime Minister that justice will be done to Poland. The other nationalities who are now

shedding their blood at the front were promised a "benevolent attitude," but what that may mean in a police-ridden State we all know. We have heard many complimentary speeches in the Duma addressed to Poland. This is certainly just and quite proper, but you must not forget that on Polish soil, as well as in other places and territories on the frontier, the blood of our people is also flowing. Alas, Jewish blood is flowing not only at the hands of the enemy, not only on account of the war or in connection with the war, but *a propos* of nothing at all. War is usually fought with alternate success. Successes are followed by reverses, for which somebody is certainly responsible. It is therefore not a bad idea to have in reserve a scapegoat on whom one could always throw the blame. Could there be any better scapegoat than the Jew? Any crime may be whitewashed by throwing the blame on him. The enemy had barely time to reach the frontiers of our country, when rumours were assiduously spread that Jewish gold was flowing to the Germans carried in aeroplanes, hidden in coffins, and in the entrails of geese. It was said that the Jews were installing and destroying telephones. These fables grew and spread, with the aid of the authorities and through the agitation in the official press, till they assumed enormous proportions.

I must remark that this legend usually synchronised with the retreat of the armies to previously prepared positions. Measures unprecedented, unheard-of, and unparalleled in the history of mankind for brutality and for the motives guiding them were adopted against the Jews and carried out before the eyes of the whole population, thereby suggesting to the people and to the army that the Jews were treated by the Government as enemies, thus stimulating the conviction that the Jewish population was placed outside the law and that they were to be treated as enemies by everybody. Such was the element of demoralisation introduced by these measures among the army. First of all these measures ordained the wholesale expulsion of the Jews from Poland. Recently these expulsions extended to the provinces of Livonia, Kurland, Volynia, Podolia, and various other provinces. Altogether about half a million people were condemned to misery and a life of wanderers. Those who saw how these expulsions were carried out will never forget them. People who only yesterday were well-to-do and contributed to charity, to-day were beggars. The expulsions were carried out within 24 hours, or sometimes 48. Women, aged men, children, and the sick—all were sent out, even lunatics were taken out from the asylums and the Jews were compelled to take them with them. At Mogilnik five thousand Jews were sent out within 24 hours; their route to Warsaw lay through Calvary, but they were compelled to take the circuitous road *via* Lublin; no opportunity was given them for taking away their belongings. Many of them had to

walk all the way. When they reached Lublin the local Jewish Committee awaited them with some provisions, but the authorities would not allow the wanderers to stop, and the latter had to continue their journey. On the way a six-year-old child fell out and died from his injuries; his parents, however, were not allowed to bury the child. I saw among the expelled some women and girls who only recently were working together with Russian ladies preparing linen for the soldiers, collecting subscriptions, and doing other philanthropic work, and now they were lying at sidings by the rail lines. I also saw among the expelled, families of reservists and even wounded soldiers wearing the St. George's Order.

It is said that when Jewish soldiers passed through towns in Poland they were witnesses of the expulsion of their own womenfolk and children. Jews were sent in goods trains like cattle in the way of consignments; the consignment was actually made out in the following way: "Goods—450 Jews; destination so-and-so." In many instances the Governor at the place of destination would refuse to accept these consignments. I was myself at Vilna when a train crowded with Jews was stationed at Novo-Vileisk junction for four days. These Jews were sent from the province of Kovno, and their destination was Poltava. However, the Governor of the latter place had them all returned to Kovno, whence they were again conveyed to Poltava. Only think of it—at a time when we are in urgent need of wagons for military purposes, when from all sides we hear of the deficiency in wagons, what is our Government doing? At one station alone it keeps idle 110 wagons packed with unfortunate Jews.

The other measure, equally unheard-of in the history of the civilised world, was the taking of hostages, not from the enemy, but from one's own subject population. Hostages were taken from the Jewish population in every town of Poland and also at Kovno, Riga, Kurland, Livonia, etc., etc. These hostages were kept under a strict *régime*. Even now Jewish hostages from Keltzy and Radom are kept in the prison of Poltava since last March, and should it happen that an anti-Government act is committed by anyone in Keltzy or Radom, these hostages will pay for it with their lives. The expelled Jewish population of Kovno was informed that, if they will give the Government some hostages as security for their good behaviour, they will be permitted to return to Kovno. As member for Kovno I have addressed a letter to the Prime Minister pointing out to him that the Jewish population of Kovno will accept a life of wandering and death from starvation, rather than comply with a request which stains their national honour and wounds their deepest sentiments as citizens. The Jews have done, and will continue to do, their duty towards their native land, and no amount of persecution will throw them off the path of honour. The permission to return upon an infamous stipulation is only an additional purposeless insult. I have received no reply to my letter.

The Jews, however, have suffered worse things; there were cases of pogroms, of loot, and of violation of women. I refrain from giving the facts here, but shall produce the documents at the sitting of the Duma to be held with closed doors. I have in my possession, for instance, a certificate issued by the Commandant to the Jewish community of Lublin, testifying that the Jewish population there behaved loyally and complied with all the regulations of the authorities, and that they have right throughout shown themselves quite loyal and devoted. It is stated in this document that it was issued to the President of the Jewish Community for the purpose of presenting it to the Field Commandant, that he might protect the Jewish community from outrages of law-breakers. As you see from this document, in order to ask for protection against law-breakers a special permit was required. You can gather from this what the plight of the Jews was when there was no such document. Speaking of the position of the Jews before the war, M. Milyukoff, the leader of the Opposition, said "the acts of the Government concerning the Jewish population approximated the times of Ferdinand and Isabella." These times, I must say, have now been surpassed. Jewish blood had not been shed in defence of Spain, as it is now being shed in defence of Russia.

I must draw your attention to the despicable calumny which had obtained such wide currency in Russian society and in the ranks of the army. To accuse a whole people of treachery is an unheard-of thing; such a libel is only possible where the Jews are deprived of rights. In those countries where Jews enjoy equal rights, such an accusation is an impossibility. The advent of this libel can only be explained by the agitation carried on in the official press, by the policy of Jew-baiting which was carried in before the war. The soil was properly prepared and the evil harvest was abundant. Generous people say that in view of the treatment meted out to the Jews, treason on their part would be excusable. This is the logical construction which a considerable portion of Russian society gives to this libel. In answer to this, I will say that it is quite true that we are deprived of rights, we are being oppressed; but we know the origin of this evil. It emanates from these benches (pointing to the seats of the Cabinet); we are being oppressed by the Russian Government, and not by the Russian people. Is it surprising, then, that we are throwing in our lot not with the Russian Government but with the Russian people? Three years ago, when the Cholm Bill* was discussed here, its authors would never have dreamt that they would very shortly have to make a curtsey to Poland. We hope that the

* In accordance with this Bill the district Cholm, in the Lublin province of Poland, was made a Russian province and for ever separated from Poland.

time is not very far distant when, together with a free Russian people, we, too, shall become free Russian citizens.

Before the whole country and the whole civilised world I declare that the calumnious accusation of treachery is a revolting lie, the invention of persons who have to hide their own crimes. Those who falsely accuse their fellow-citizens of treachery and damp the spirit of the people are themselves committing thereby acts of treachery.

(M. Freedman reads a portion of the indictment of the Lomzha case, where several agents of the Military Reconnaissance Department were accused and condemned for having placed in a cinematograph show, belonging to a Jew, telephone apparatus in order that the Jew might be accused of espionage.)

'You have all read the news, continued M. Freedman, placarded at the request of the authorities throughout Russia, that in the village of Kuzhi a Russian regiment had suffered owing to the Jews having hidden a regiment of German soldiers, who in the night came out from their hiding place and annihilated the Russians. Kerensky (member of the Duma) had investigated the whole matter on the spot. It turned out that in the village there were no cellars where German soldiers could be concealed, with the exception of one 9 feet long and 7 feet wide, and below a man's height in depth. It further turned out that the reverse suffered by the Russian regiment happened on the 28th May, whereas the six Jewish families of the place had left a day before, with the permission of the military authorities. We know that the data of this case were in the hands of the Minister of the Interior. Nevertheless, this calumnious statement has not been withdrawn even now! However terrible our misfortunes, however great our sacrifices and our losses, this moral insult is the hardest of all. A few months ago, when one of our towns on the western frontier was in danger, there was a service in the Jewish synagogue. The Jews prayed to God, and the old Jewish Rabbi concluded the prayer with these words: "Oh, God, save our town and take our souls." With this prayer on his lips the old Rabbi died in the synagogue.

Such was the spirit that animated the old Rabbi, and such were the feelings of the Jewish people. But a blow from behind has been dealt at our people: a blow heavy enough to paralyse its forces. With you, gentlemen of the Duma, it rests to say something and achieve something which will rescue the Jewish people from its desperate plight and place it among the ranks of Russian citizens defending their country. I do not know whether the Duma will accomplish this, but if it does, it will perform its duty of honour, it will accomplish an act of imperial wisdom so essential for the welfare and greatness of Russia.

Summary of Interpellation introduced on the 16th August, 1915, by the Social Democratic Party in the Duma concerning the persecution of the Jews. This Interpellation was also signed by the Peasant Group of Toil and the Constitutional Democratic Party.

The Interpellation points out that the acts perpetrated upon the Jewish population in the course of the year are beyond human imagination. The whole Jewish population of six million people were maliciously accused of treachery, and under cover of this vicious accusation unheard-of persecutions were started against them.

The Interpellation describes cases of expulsion of the entire peaceful Jewish population in the theatre of war.

Up to the end of April of the current year these expulsions were carried out principally in Poland. 'On the 25th April a decree was issued ordering the wholesale expulsion of all Jews without any exception from all regions of military operations and from points occupied by the Russian Army. On the 3rd and 4th of May an analogous decree was issued affecting many towns in the provice of Kovno; in every case either no time was allowed for preparations to leave, or the time allowed did not exceed 24 hours.'

Wherever the expulsions took place the houses of the Jews were gutted by the mob, either while their owners were yet in town, or soon after they had left. This plundering was going on before the eyes of the police who, with a few exceptions, did not interfere.

At Homel the police and gendarmery prohibited the offering of food to the expelled victims passing through that place, who were suffering from hunger and thirst.

At Belitza the gendarmery threatened to shoot down anybody offering food to the expelled Jews, who were kept at the station in sealed railway carriages.

The police and railway authorities were keeping crowded trains with these unfortunates locked up for days in the carriages. At the station Unecha, for instance, the railway carriages with these victims were not opened for a week and a half, and by the end of this time the majority of the inmates were half dead; 16 people were taken out stricken with scarlet fever, and one with typhoid fever.

Some of the expelled who were given passes to certain localities were refused admission upon their arrival, and were sent back to their starting point. This happened, for instance, in many places in the Province of Poltava.

The Interpellation dwells at great length upon the *communiqué* published in the *Pravitelstveny Vestnik*, the Government official paper, about Kuzhi, in May last. According to the *com-*

muniqué the Jews at Kuzhi had hidden in their cellars a regiment of German soldiers, who, emerging from their hiding place in the night, attacked the small Russian force stationed there and made themselves masters of the place. This *communiqué* was published in all the official papers and was placarded in Petrograd, Warsaw, and numerous other towns, together with the other news of the war. The authorities all over Russia requested the editors of periodical publications to have this *communiqué* inserted in their issues, threatening them with administrative punishment in case they refused. Now it has been established that the *communiqué* about Kuzhi was an invention from beginning to end. There were only three Jewish houses at Kuzhi, and altogether six Jewish families, who, however, at the date referred to in the *Pravitelstveny Vestnik*, were no longer in the village of Kuzhi, having left previously with the permission of the Russian military authorities.

Finally, the authors of the Interpellation dwell on the taking of Jewish hostages by the authorities. Prominent members of the Jewish community were taken as hostages at Prushkoff, Sochatzeff, Zechanoff, Lomzha, Radom, etc., etc. They were kept in prison and several of them were executed. Even now Jewish hostages are kept in the prisons of Poltava and Chernigoff.

The authors of the Interpellation point out that the keeping in prisons (which are under the control of the Minister of the Interior) of persons against whom not only was there no charge preferred, but who, on the contrary, were known to be above suspicion, or otherwise they would not have been taken as hostages—is a criminal violation of the law on the part of persons whose duty it is to watch that nobody is kept under arrest, unless there is a legal order issued by the properly constituted authorities.

DUMA SESSION,

16th August (3rd August, Russian Style), 1915.

DEBATE ON ABOVE INTERPELLATION.

TCHKEIDZE (Social Democrat).

Let me give you a few reasons for the urgency of our interpellation. You all know that the Government of the *régime* of the 3rd of June* made the Jewish question the corner-stone

* In spite of the solemn promise made on the 30th October, 1905, that the Constitution as granted would not be altered otherwise than with the consent of the Duma and the Upper Chamber, the Electoral Law had been altered by a *coup de force* on the 3rd June, 1907. The new Electoral Law had robbed the great masses of the people of their electoral rights and had conferred the greatest power upon the landed nobility who are the backbone of the reaction in Russia.

of its policy, and whenever the Government was in a critical position their first blows were directed against the Jews, *i.e.*, along the line of least resistance. You all remember how, at the first sign of the movement for freedom in Russia, the Government revenged itself upon the Jews; and you, no doubt, remember well the pogroms of those days. When the *régime* of the 3rd of June had spent itself, when all the illusions connected with this *régime* had vanished, the Government immediately took cover behind the back of the Jews, entrenching themselves and strengthening their positions. Remember the scandalous Beiliss trial!

Last year the war broke out. In my opinion the deep significance of this war was that it placed before the Government of the 3rd June the fateful question: to be or not to be. And the Government turns on the Jews once more. This time, instead of the blood ritual accusation, there is the charge of treachery. The whole of Russia and the whole world know who are the people responsible for the present position in which Russia finds herself, either at the theatre of war or in the rear of military operations. The whole country knows that they are not the Jews, but those who batten on Government contracts in connection with the supply of the army. The culprits are those who with the help of the Miasoedoffs, Grotguses, and others were betraying Russia. If it is really a question of finding out the real author of the present situation, it is necessary to establish the part played by the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Maklakoff—who has just retired—in the criminal association of traitors, several of whom were recently hanged. This Minister represented more than anybody else the *régime* of the 3rd of June.

Gentlemen, it is now a year that we are being repeatedly told that this shambles, this ocean of blood now being shed, is in the name of law, truth, and justice, in the name of the highest principles of freedom, equality, and fraternity. If this is so, then, gentlemen, permit us to introduce our interpellation and ask the Government a few questions. Under what law is a whole people made to answer for the crimes—let us assume the heaviest crimes—of some of its members? What kind of truth is this, when lying communiqués are being fabricated and published in the official organ of the Government, the *Pravitelstveny Vestnik*, to the effect that the Jews at Kuzhi have betrayed the Russian soldiers to the enemy? Why have the various periodical publications been ordered to publish this communication under threat of penalties? What justice is this that requires that a Jewish volunteer, who has been several times in battle, and is now crippled and mutilated, should be sent out within twenty-four hours from places in Russia where he was looking for some employment? What humanity is this which forbids the offering of food to hungry Jewish fugitives kept in sealed wagons at the stations

as our authorities have done? What freedom is this to have the whole Jewish Press suppressed and destroyed by a single stroke of the pen. What fraternity is this when a part of the army is set against the Jewish soldiers who are risking their lives in the same trenches with the others? The Germans are being accused of having violated the accepted rules of war, that they are using asphyxiating gases and that they mutilate prisoners. We express our deepest indignation and protest against such acts. May they prove an eternal shame upon the ruling classes of Germany and upon the whole capitalist class as personified by the German Government. But, gentlemen, in the name of what code of law are orders being issued to the Russian Army to drive the Jews—the peaceful Jewish population—in front under the fire of bullets? By virtue of what code are Jewish subjects of Russia being taken as hostages and thrown into prison, in order to subject them to torture and to have them shot. The Germans are being branded for not having spared the greatest monuments of art, for having destroyed Louvain, the Rheims Cathedral. But let me ask you what ethical or æsthetic principle underlies the outraging of a Jewish woman within the precincts of the Synagogue whither she flew in the hope of escaping her terrible fate? (Shouts from the Right: "What? Shame!") Shame, indeed, but this is a fact. Indeed, the capitalist world has revealed its true countenance, and there is nothing sacred for it save the golden calf and the mailed fist.

M. DZUBINSKY.

(Peasant Group of Toil.)

This Interpellation deserves your attention not only because it refers to strikingly brutal acts committed in contravention of the law, not only because hundreds of thousands of quite innocent citizens are placed in the category of criminals and exiles; not only because hundreds of quite innocent people are even now smarting in prison as hostages—but because of reasons of State which are of vital importance to us. All the misdeeds enumerated in the Interpellation, which were carried out with such energy by the civil and military authorities, show that even the military authorities are devoting at the present moment great attention to and waste a great deal of energy in the prosecution of a harmful policy, instead of using this energy and attention in the prosecution of their proper task. Instead of attending to the requirements of the army and providing them with everything needful, they are diverting the attention of society into another direction which is absolutely injurious. This is probably being done with the intention of finding a fictitious culprit, to concentrate upon him the attention of the people so that in the meantime the real culprits

may escape. A screen is thereby put up for the Miasoedoffs and other of our traitors behind which they may take shelter. I am certain that the newly-formed Imperial Military Commission may find plenty of material for investigation also in this direction. It will find in this Interpellation facts which will show why the attention of the public was misdirected, why our own subjects were being ruined, thereby placing in jeopardy the supply of our army. As representative of the 5th Siberian Division I have been at the front, and can bear personal witness to the immeasurable brutality with which the Jews were expelled from the province of Radom. The whole population was driven out at night time within the space of a few hours. At eleven o'clock the Jews were informed that they must leave immediately, and those found behind by daybreak will be hanged. And in the night the Jewish population started for the nearest town, Ilzha, lying at a distance of thirty versts (about twenty miles). The old, the sick, the paralysed, and the invalids had to be carried in arms, as no means of conveyance were obtainable. The number of these expelled is enormous. For instance, the expelled from the province of Kovno number about 150,000, from the province of Grodno about 60,000, from Poland about 200,000; altogether, about half a million of people are condemned to suffering and are placed on a footing with criminals, because the police and gendarmery are treating the expelled Jews exactly as if they were criminals. At one of the stations, for instance, the Jewish Committee of Homel was not permitted to hand food or water or give any assistance to the fugitives who were in the carriages of the train. In one case the carriages of a train conveying the expelled were not even opened once during the whole journey, and at the stations *en route* nobody was permitted to approach the carriages. Most of the expelled in this train were found afterwards half dead, sixteen had the scarlet fever, one was ill with typhoid fever, and one woman died of exhaustion on the third day. Some Governors at the place of destination added yet more to the sufferings of these unfortunate innocent people. In this respect ——— (name deleted by Censor), the Governor of Poltava, Hirs, the Governor of Minsk, and the Governor of Ekaterinoslav, have shown particular zeal. They have converted the expulsion of the Jews into a sort of exile under police supervision. The passports were unlawfully taken away from the Jews and passes issued to them instead. These passes bore in every case a mark showing the time-limit within which their bearers had to arrive at a certain point in one of five provinces. In these five provinces allocated to them, the expelled were driven from pillar to post, from one place to another. The Governors of these provinces treated the expelled like criminals. The Jewish Committee of Poltava was, for instance, officially reprimanded by the Governor of Poltava for calling itself "Committee for the relief

of Jews who suffered from the war." He requested the Committee to alter the title to "Committee for the relief of expelled Jews." The Jews, he said, were expelled because they were "politically unsound." The cruelty of the local authorities showed itself even when the Ukase was promulgated, stopping all further expulsions *en masse*. The local authorities made use of this Ukase in order to continue their inhuman policy, and turned it into a new means of oppressing the Jews. They have issued an order to the effect that all Jews arriving in their localities should be returned to the places where they came from. When the Governor of Poltava issued such an order, the Jews who arrived from Kovno returned back, but found that they were not allowed to return to Kovno and had to go once more to Poltava. The same cruel methods were used by the local authorities even after the Minister of the Interior had found it possible at last to widen somewhat the area whither Jews could be sent out, and had ordered that the provinces of Voronezh and Penza should be opened for them. In short, every decree which promised to lighten the lot of the Jews was used by the local authorities as a further means of oppressing them and of making sport of them. But the most arbitrary and cruel measure is the notorious order prescribing the taking of hostages from our own subjects. Note, such hostages were taken from among the more wealthy and from among those who are held in great respect even by the authorities. I ask you, by what law of the Russian Empire are people cast into prison solely because they command respect? By what law is it permitted to try and punish absolutely innocent people for offences committed by others? Even now there are about 400 such hostages in the prisons of Poltava, Ekaterinoslav, and Mohileff, who are in constant danger of being hanged at any moment. Gentlemen, this is not merely a threat! Just listen to this extract from an army order: "The Commander-in-Chief permits expulsion *en masse* only in exceptional cases, but considers it necessary to take hostages from among the Rabbis and wealthy Jews; when hostages are taken a warning should be issued that in case of treachery on the part of the Jewish population the hostages will be hanged." At Sochachoff three such hostages were hanged for a crime not committed by them, but by persons quite unknown to them. It is time, gentlemen, that we gave up this mediæval practice of taking hostages; it is time that we released from prison the innocent people who are kept there. All this, gentlemen, puts us to shame in the eyes of the whole civilised world, in the eyes of our Allies. Not only is it all cruel and contrary to the law, but from the point of view of the interests of the State it is injurious and purposeless.

On the question of urgency for the Interpellation, 122 voted against and 77 for. The whole Right, the Nationalists and Octobrists, voted against; the Opposition, including the Poles, voted for.

Tchkeidze then moved that the Interpellation should be adopted without urgency, and the Committee should be instructed to submit a report on the matter.

TCHKEIDZE (Social Democrat).

One must be utterly devoid of any sense of elementary duty, of responsibility, and of the faculty to understand civil problems and interests of State, if one can in the course of a whole year refrain from uttering even a slight protest against all the crimes that have been perpetrated upon the Jewish people. How bitter and cruel must sound in the ears of the Jews such phrases as that with the end of the war everything will right itself. I ask you earnestly, can any great cause, any great problem, be solved by a country where millions of citizens are treated like slaves and pariahs. Only free citizens can accomplish a great task, but here the question of full rights for the Jews was never so acute as it is now. What opinion of all this have the allies of Russia—republican, democratic France and freedom-loving England? I move that our Interpellation be reported upon by the Committee within a fixed time, so that the Government may have the opportunity to give us an answer.

On being put to the vote, Tchkeidze's motion was adopted by 93 against 77, part of the Octobrists voting with the Opposition.

On the 12th August the Interpellation came before the Committee of the Duma. The Interpellation contains three points. The first point refers to the decrees ordering the expulsion of Jews *en masse*. The second refers to the official *communiqué* about Jewish treachery at Kuzhi, which upon investigation turned out a pure fabrication. The third deals with the hostages which were taken from among the most honoured and prominent members of the Jewish community.

The findings of the Committee in connection with these three points were:—

Point One.—Orders of military authorities cannot form the subject of an Interpellation in the Duma, but the carrying into effect of such orders and under the conditions described are absolutely illegal.

Point Two.—The compulsion used in respect of newspapers, obliging them to publish the official *communiqué* containing the story of Kuzhi, was illegal.

Point Three.—The prison authorities, in accepting the hostages, and also the authorities in robbing these innocent men of their freedom, were acting unlawfully.

All the three points were adopted by the Committee, and Mr. A. M. Maslenikoff (Progressist) was instructed to report to the Duma.*

DUMA SESSION,

30th August (17th August, Russian Style), 1915.

Continuation of Debate on the Fugitives Provision Bill. The first debate took place on the 27th August behind closed doors.

M. SVENTZITZKY
(Member Polish Group).

The name of fugitive is hardly applicable to those masses of the population now in need of assistance. The Polish population and the Polish peasant in particular does not throw up his land. He is not so large-hearted, and, in spite of his inveterate enemy, the German, he sticks to his native land. He is prepared to dig himself in, like a mole, and to come out and continue his labour when danger is past. It is hardly correct to call them fugitives: in their case it is expulsion by force. The orders of the Commander-in-Chief demanded the protection of the property of the population, but the authorities have done otherwise. The population was driven in front. Their cattle was requisitioned, but no receipts were given to their owners. The non-issuing of receipts was made a sort of rule, which, but for a few insignificant exceptions, was strictly adhered to. The population, fearing these requisitions, drove their cattle before them, but only a few succeeded in saving a portion of them. The women and children were compelled to dig up the potato crops. At Smolensk, Colonel Mikhailoff gave the order to send 50,000 fugitives to Ufa and 50,000 to Orenburg. When some of the fugitives implored him to let them go to Dorogobuzh, where they had relatives, the brutal order was given for the train to start, and husbands, wives, and children got separated from one another. I was told there were several babies on the platform, and when the bell rang, the conductors threw the babies haphazard into the carriages, and nobody knows where the babies are—at Ufa or Orenburg! And a good

*The Interpellation went no further. The Duma was prorogued before the Committee reported upon the subject.

many people believe that all this was necessary for strategical reasons! . . . At the station at Orenburg one could see a girl crying because she was brought to Orenburg instead of Kharkoff, where her mother was living. A mother and daughter, with a baby in arms, were crying because they were sent to Siberia, where they had not a soul to befriend them, whilst they had friends close by at Vladimir. A husband was sent south whilst his family was sent east.

When we met here the first time there was already plenty of misfortune in our land, but you have not heard a single Polish groan, a single Polish sob from this platform. We deemed it necessary to live through the heavy blows of Fate. But now, when a fifth of our population is in danger of being lost to us by being removed to Russia, or even if they are not lost they will find on their return a devastated country, we consider ourselves in duty bound to raise the cry of "Stop!" I must say that on the memorable day of the 1st August, when we had heard from this platform the message of Autonomy, it left me personally cold. I felt that it is like mustard after a meal; but when we have noticed the hand of a representative of the Russian people stretched out to us we wept. I am sure that this hand will assist us now, so that the evacuation may not be carried out in such a way, that the population may not be sent by force to distant provinces, that children may not be separated from their parents, and husbands from their wives, etc.

N. O. YANUSHKEVITCH
(Lithuanian Deputy).

The speaker is at a loss to understand why the Bill was at first discussed with closed doors. He says: They are afraid lest Russia should learn the bitter truth which is known to the whole world. Our enemies know the truth pretty well. One may see in the German papers photographic illustrations of our burnt, ruined villages, etc. True, in 1812, villages and settlements were deliberately burnt down, but then it was along a narrow strip of land. Now, however, whole territories, with millions of inhabitants, are given over to fire and sword. To-day one order is issued, to-morrow another, and on the following day the whole population is driven out, the country laid waste, and the people turned into beggars. Whole peoples were driven out, the Poles, partly the Letts, Lithuanians, etc.

M. FREEDMAN
(Jewish Member).

The first fugitives were the Jews. They were, however, fugitives by compulsion. They were expelled at a time when the remainder of the population were sitting firmly in their places.

In the province of Kovno the Jews were expelled between the 3rd and 5th May, whereas Wilkomir, Ponevesh, and Shavel, in the province of Kovno, were only occupied by the Germans in July. For a whole month the Jewish population was wandering in search of shelter. When some of the Jews asked permission to return for a few days in order to save their property, such permission was refused. I have in my possession the reply given by the Governor of the province to a telegram asking permission to remove from Ponevesh stocks of cotton goods belonging to Jews. The reply was that " in view of local needs, such stocks must not be removed, but may be sold to customers on the spot." As the owners had no right to return to the town, the stocks were neither removed nor sold, and subsequently fell into the hands of the Germans. Thanks to such action on the part of the Governor, the Germans took possession of millions' worth of goods. When the peasants were offering at exorbitant prices (Rs.50 instead of Rs.14) to cart away some of the goods of the expelled Jews, the local police would approach the peasants and tell them not to cart Jewish goods because the Jews were spies. And the peasants would naturally obey. That was the assistance given by the police to the fugitives. . . .

DUMA SESSION,

31st August (18th August, Russian Style), 1915.

Debate on the Question put by the Group of Toil and the Social Democrats about arrests in Poland.

M. KERENSKY (Group of Toil).

When autonomy for Poland was proclaimed from this platform by the Government, it seemed that some, at least, of the wishes of the Polish people, who dreamt of a free and independent Polish kingdom, were going to be realised. However, during the retreat of the Russian armies from Poland, the Russian authorities did all they could to dash all the hopes of the Polish nation to the ground. I am in possession of most astounding facts. Here are a few of them. An official of the Post Office is caught in the street, arrested, taken out of Poland, and cast into prison in a Russian town, and all because he did not happen to have his passport on him. They have arrested doctors of philosophy, doctors of medicine, consulting engineers, etc., and have taken them to Petrograd: they have arrested mothers of large families,

have torn them away from their little children; but the most horrible thing of all is that they have arrested hundreds of little boys and girls and are keeping them in prison here, in Petrograd, presumably on the charge that they are against the Russian authorities and are fighting for the independence of Poland! Over a hundred Polish women were brought from Poland and are now imprisoned at Petrograd; of these only six were formally charged. The others do not know why and wherefore they are kept in prison. Poland was shocked by these facts, and when Polish representatives applied to the Assistant Public Prosecutor of the Warsaw Sessions, who is at Moscow and in charge of all these cases, his reply was: " The papers in connection with these arrests are locked up in some trunks, but we do not know where these trunks are, and until we have found and opened them these people will stay in prison."

Such acts are a stain on our name and on our culture. . . .

M. HARUSEVICZ,

speaking in the name of the Polish Group, said:—

Long before the occupation of Warsaw by the Germans we had received information to the effect that at Warsaw and other towns of Poland numerous arrests were made, and that all the prisoners were taken to various places in Russia. We receive hundreds of communications informing us that these people are kept in prison without being interrogated and without any charge being formulated against them. To our horror we have discovered that among the prisoners are many children under 15 and 14 years of age. I shall give you a typical instance. Twenty-two pupils of two adjacent schools at Warsaw had arranged a picnic outside of the town. On the 25th April they were all arrested. Domiciliary searches were made at their homes, and nothing at all of a compromising nature was found there, except in one place, where a list containing the names of all the pupils who participated in the picnic was found. Nevertheless, the pupils were arrested, sent to Vilno, and thence to the prison of Kharkoff. Four months have elapsed, and the Government had not found time yet to finish this case.

The Question was unanimously adopted by the Duma.

DUMA SESSIONS,

7th and 10th September (25th and 28th August, Russian Style), 1915.

DEBATE ON CENSORSHIP.

M. SKOBELEFF
(Social Democrat).

. . . The policy of the Government remained the same even after the outbreak of the war. The Labour press having been suppressed before the war, it was now the turn of the non-Russian periodicals. Of the Ukrainian press nothing but the memory of it was left. Over twenty periodical publications, from the dailies to the scientific monthlies, were suppressed. Already at the beginning of the war Yiddish correspondence, irrespective of its contents, was being destroyed in large quantities by the postal authorities in numerous places in Russia. Most of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish soldiers, who can only write Yiddish, were thus denied the possibility of sending letters home and, may be, of sending their last farewell to mother. Afterwards, without any reasons whatever, the whole Jewish press in Hebrew and Yiddish was suppressed, and even children's magazines were not spared. A people of six millions was thus denied the possibility of speech at a time of unprecedented human suffering and terrible national trials. The millions of Ukrainians and Jews were cut off from the whole world in the midst of world-wide events. We are in duty bound to give back to the masses of the Jewish and Ukrainian peoples their native tongue, their native press. . . .

MILYUKOFF
(Leader Constitutional Democrats).

. . . . I shall now turn to another aspect of the military censorship, which shows vividly how it was used as a political instrument with the object of furthering the interests of a faction. I am referring to the attitude of the censorship to national questions and particularly to the Jewish question. In several towns a circular was received. It read: "It is forbidden to publish articles inciting the population against the Jews, non-Russians, and even against subjects of enemy countries." Can there be anything plainer than this? However, there was another clause tacked on to it requesting the press "to refrain from one-sided comments upon valorous deeds by Jewish soldiers." Now I shall show you how this circular was interpreted and how it was applied. All information concerning deeds of valour by or distinctions

bestowed upon Jews was suppressed as a matter of course in conformity with the circular. The censor, for instance, suppressed the declaration made by Obninsky, member of the first Duma, in which he said: "During the eight months of my stay in Galicia I had numerous occasions to satisfy myself as to the groundlessness of the legend about the prevalence of espionage among the Jews.* The number of convictions at the Russian field courts-martial was insignificant; it hardly reached 10 out of a hundred. . . . As to the Jewish privates in the Russian Army I heard nothing but good reports of them from commanders of regiments, brigades and divisions. Nevertheless, the higher military command are collecting data about Jewish soldiers, and they do not hide their tendency of suspecting these soldiers of espionage, desertion, and of ill-will to Russia. My impression is that these legends and the campaign against soldiers of our own country emanates from narrow but extremely powerful military circles." The censor also excised the opinion of Count Bobrinsky, late Viceroy of Galicia, as to the "quite correct" attitude of the Jews in Galicia. The censor passed for publication the opinion expressed by the Leader of the Monarchist Organisations,† that "we must stop hunting the Jew, this business must now be dropped," but he suppressed the sentence which followed it and where the above-mentioned leader gave his reasons for such an opinion. This is the suppressed sentence: "The Jews are fighting honourably in the ranks of our army; the Jewish population is suffering from military operations in the military zone equally with the rest of the population. The Jews cannot be our enemies. I have been right through the front, and consider the prattle about specific Jewish espionage sheer nonsense." On the other hand, the censor permits the following opinions in the notorious paper *Grosa*: "Now an excellent opportunity presents itself of making an end to the Jewish question. Nothing more is required than to gather the Jews from all over Russia and drive them into those towns which are sure to fall into the hands of the Germans. The Jews may then be struck off the roll of Russian subjects. Afterwards, when the Russian troops commence reconquering these towns, the Jews should be driven further on to the German lines and all their property should be confiscated. If we do not take advantage of this splendid opportunity, a better occasion will never arise." Not only is such stuff permitted by the censor, but sometimes the press receives an order commanding it to publish certain things directed against the Jews. You all know the notorious communiqué about Kuzhi, which turned out to be an infamous lie. You know that this communiqué was officially placarded on all the hoardings and circulated broadcast all over Russia.

At a single stroke of the pen the entire Yiddish press had been

* This is in reference to the Galician Jews who are Austrian subjects.
† M. Orloff.

suspended, and no Yiddish newspaper is permitted to appear. Even the present "renovated" Cabinet has not repealed this interdiction.‡ What this suspension of the Jewish press means will be evident from the following statistical data. At Warsaw, Vilna, and Odessa eleven publications were closed, of which the dailies *Haint* had a circulation of 130,000, *Moment* over 100,000, *Ounser Leben* 20,000, six other publications varying in circulation between 5,000 and 8,000. You will see from this that they were not little sheets without readers, but papers serving the needs of a whole nation, a large proportion of whom do not command any other language but Yiddish. Therefore, the suppression of Yiddish amounts to the disorganisation and the immersion into darkness of a whole people, to say nothing about the insult thereby inflicted upon its national dignity.

And now about the Ukrainian press. I shall not stop to relate how the Ukrainian press was treated in Galicia, but what about Kieff and Poltava? There, too, eleven publications were destroyed. I shall not dwell on the details; they are given in the Interpellation which is before us.* Now just note, this is done at a time when a portion of the Ukrainian population passes under the rule of our enemies, when on the other side of the frontier a new and free Ukrainian literature is springing up, and one can imagine what tendency it is developing. And our Ukrainian press here, which was manifesting its patriotic spirit and was organising the population for the fight against the enemy, had been destroyed, and can no longer, by an interchange of ideas with its readers, counteract the influence of the Ukrainian press on the other side of the frontier. Let me also mention the Labour press. There is an Interpellation on the table about that, too. I have pointed out several times from this platform the importance of the Labour press as an organising factor. Every organisation introduces a habit of discipline, reserve, and moderation. By eliminating from the working masses all their organising elements you are stimulating among them tendencies which are not to your liking. If a newspaper oversteps the law, well, there is a court for that; but to suppress Labour papers purely because they are Labour shows an incapacity of getting out of the rut of the old methods of Government.

M. BOMASH
(Jewish Member).

Our worst enemies have not done us as much damage and injury as that inflicted upon us by the military censorship. The latter was used as an instrument against us by the members of the Government, Tsheglovitoff, Maklakoff, Sukhomlinoff, and by

‡ At the moment of going to press this interdiction is still in force.
* The Interpellation about the Ukrainian Press was accepted by the Duma at the close of the debate.

Yanushkeyitch.* The latter was the worst of the lot. He has now left,† but not before he had done us all the harm his evil genius was capable of. The censorship has made it its object to suppress the truth about the Jews, and to encourage all sorts of falsehoods and libels upon us. On the one hand, circulars were issued requesting the press not to incite one part of the population against the other, and, on the other hand, the censor passed, for example, such opinions as "that the Jews at the front are the enemies of our army," which appeared in the *Novoe Vremia*, or "that not one Jewish soldier is to be trusted," etc., which appeared in the *Russkoe Znamia*. The censor permits the publication of such nonsense as—Jewish doctors maim Russian soldiers at the Red Cross hospitals and infect them with syphilis. The official army organ, *Russky Invalid*, writes that Russia owes her might to the absence of "Mordecai" majors in the army,‡ because the "Mordecais" are only a demoralising element. The official organ is oblivious of the fact that many high posts in the Allied armies are held by Jews. Names of Jewish soldiers decorated with the order of St. George are struck out by the censor. News of brave deeds by Jewish soldiers serving in the French Army is passed by the censor, but in every instance the word Jew is struck out so that the reader may not know that the deed was done by a Jew. The paper *Razsvet* was not permitted to publish the information that the local Chief of Police at Fridrichstat (Kurland) issued a proclamation against anti-Jewish pogroms. All news about the petitions lodged by various Town Corporations and other public bodies in favour of the Jews is suppressed. When the wholesale expulsions of the Jews commenced—this was the work of Yanushkevitch—the papers were not permitted to reproduce information concerning the number of the expelled, their destination, and their need of assistance. Thus, for instance, the appeal of the Jewish community of Warsaw about assistance for the Jewish fugitives was suppressed by the censor. The censor also suppressed all news about the necessity to stop the anti-Jewish agitation, to abolish the educational restrictive measures against the Jews, etc.

The worst blow, however, was the suppression on the 5th July last of the Jewish press. Six million of people were thereby robbed of their tongue and thrown into impenetrable darkness and ignorance of what is happening around them. All the suppressed papers have never before been fined and have never been confiscated. The only explanation for this act is that at the head of its authors was Yanushkevitch, a Jew-hater, who could not deny himself the pleasure of inflicting this blow upon the Jews.

Every nation, however, has a right to its tongue; and to deny a nation the tongue of its forefathers is an iniquity and a crime.

* Ex-Chief of General Staff and the right-hand man of the Grand Duke Nicholas.
† He was transferred, together with the Grand Duke, to the Caucasus.
‡ Jews are not allowed to hold commissions in the army

M. DYMSZA

(Member Polish Group).

When the forcible removal of the whole population from the kingdom of Poland and the deliberate destruction of the wealth of the country commenced,* the military censorship suppressed all statements made in connection with it. Nobody was to know of the terrible violence done to us. And what was the result? The State had incurred incalculable losses, a whole country was ruined economically and ethnographically, several millions of people were made paupers and are now being sent to Siberia. All this was kept secret from us. Twelve days ago, when centres of culture and the whole economic fabric of the Vilna and Kovno provinces were being demolished, we asked the Commander-in-Chief to study the matter, and to stop the barbarous methods adopted. We have received a satisfactory reply; the Petrograd censorship had, however, suppressed the publication of the telegram sent by us. All this is done with the object of hiding the truth where the truth is patent to all. I have received to-day a letter from the province of Minsk giving a horrible picture of how the fugitives move between Baranovichi and Minsk, how little children die of cold at the stations. There is no organisation, no assistance, and no help. Here is a nice case: Four officials occupy a whole carriage, whilst dying women and children are left on the platform, and the stationmaster allows such a thing. The papers are not permitted by the Censor to write about it. I shall not dwell on the orders given by the censorship to the press not to publish any discussions upon the future status of Poland, or on the striking out by the censor of the word "autonomy" and such other curious things. I am sure that if the censorship would stick to the law, the Polish, Lithuanian, and the other border populations would not have been ruined by evacuation.

No statement, either in denial or in explanation of the facts revealed in the above speeches and interpellations, was made by the Government, either in the Duma or in the press.

* This refers to the "evacuation" of the population and to the laying waste of the country practised by the Russian authorities in Poland prior to its evacuation by the Russian troops.

APPENDIX A.

Speech delivered on the 4th September, 1915, at the Imperial Council (Upper Chamber) by Baron R. R. ROSEN, former Russian Ambassador at Washington.

Putting aside all political, economic, and psychological motives, the deep significance of the conflict before us and of the unshakable resolution of the Allies to fight to a finish against Germany's desire to dominate by brutal force the whole world, is the conviction rooted in the public mind that the German doctrine of "Might is Right" constitutes the gravest danger to the human race, and cannot be tolerated.

In such a just cause the whole civilised world should have been on the side of the Allies, to say nothing of countries geographically so situated that they are in danger of having to share the fate of brave and hapless Belgium. Why is it then, that in reality their attitude is somewhat different? It is undoubtedly in our power to remove one of the causes which make the public opinion in neutral countries hesitate about taking up an attitude favourable to us

In this struggle against German Imperialism and Absolutism for Right and Justice, for the freedom and independence of the smaller nations, we fight hand in hand with the most advanced peoples in Europe, and we cannot win the sympathy of the civilised world unless we bring our internal front, so to speak, on a level with the political ideas of our valiant Allies, and apply them in the administration of our border provinces and in the government of the nationalities forming part of the population of Russia.

There are two diametrically opposed methods of government. One is the method adopted by our Allies. Its results were seen in the enthusiastic outburst of patriotism throughout the self-governing British Colonies, and even among the non-English elements: the Irish, French-Canadians, Boers, and Indians. They all rushed to the defence of the British Empire. Thanks to this method of government it was possible for England to entrust the chief command of the troops in South Africa to that very General, who, sixteen years ago, led the Boers against the English, and who is now Prime Minister of the British South African Colony.

The other method is that of the Germans. They have applied it to the population of Posen, Schleswig, Alsace and Lorraine, with the result that even the pure German portion of the population of Alsace retained its passionate attachment for France, who never treated them as second-rate citizens, or as possible traitors of their country.

In our policy towards our border provinces, and towards the so-called non-Russian nationalities, we have, to the greatest detriment of the real interests of Russia, followed closely the German system of government. We have even improved upon it by an addition of mediæval religious intolerance. People may say that war is decided by military power and not by the degree of sympathy, which neutral countries may show for the home policy of this or that State. The German Government obviously regards this question in a different light, or else it would not be spending millions on propaganda in all the countries, even the remotest in the world. Not only do we not counteract this propaganda, but by our domestic policy we supply our enemies with weapons with which to set against us the public opinion of such countries as the United States of America—the only great neutral power—and our neighbour, Sweden. It is inconceivable that those who guide our home policy should not be able to realise, that by our mediæval treatment of the Jewish population of Russia, and by our systematic outrages upon the constitutional habit of mind of the Finnish people, we are helping enormously the pro-German propaganda in neutral countries which our enemies carry on with lavish means to the detriment of the cause of the Allies. The question is, Why has not our Govern-

ment settled these questions once and for all, as it did—alas so late—the question of Polish autonomy? The only answer is that our Government did not wish to renounce a traditional policy so dear to the hearts of our militant Nationalists.

It is therefore incumbent upon the Legislative Chambers to assist the Government in this matter, and to introduce bills abolishing all the restrictive laws against the Jews, and cancelling the law of July 17 concerning Finland.

Such measures would undoubtedly facilitate the task of the Government in international matters, and would meet with the lively appreciation of our valiant Allies.

We must bear in mind that this great European War is not only a conflict of interests, but also of ideas and principles. In fighting against German Militarism Russia is taking her stand on the side of those who fight for the triumph of the idea of Right and Freedom, and it is necessary that no more shall there be people in Russia oppressed or deprived of their rights.

APPENDIX B.

Extension of the Pale of Jewish Settlement.

On September 2, 1915, a circular was issued by the Russian Government granting permission to Jews to settle in towns all over Russia, with the exception of Petrograd, Moscow, and the Imperial Residential places. However, the villages, the Cossack territories, Imperial Domains, and localities under the authority of the Minister of War and the Minister of the Imperial Court remain closed to the Jews as heretofore.

It would be erroneous to assume that this circular signified a change of attitude on the part of the Government towards the Jews. It was a *temporary* measure dictated by the military situation, and in particular by the policy of the Russian military authorities towards the Jews, whom they have singled out from amongst the rest of the population in the war zone and its rear, and turned out from their homes, driving them towards the interior of Russia beyond the Pale. Of the latter very little was left; the major part of it was occupied by the Germans (Poland, Lithuania, etc.), and the remainder was to a large extent either in the military zone of operations or in its rear, from which the Jews, as mentioned before, were rigorously excluded. Some place had to be found for the hundreds of thousands of Jewish fugitives, who were either flying before the invasion of the enemy or driven by the Russian military authorities; and the Government saw itself compelled to open for them some provinces in the interior hitherto forbidden to them. Very soon, however, the state of overcrowding in these provinces and the evils resulting therefrom grew to such an alarming extent that the Government, in order to alleviate above all the sufferings of the local Russian population,* decided to extend to the Jews the right to settle in all towns in Russia with the exceptions mentioned above.

On the 9th September, a week after the Circular was published, a Conference took place between members of the Government and representatives of the Progressive *Bloc*,† when the program of the latter was discussed, and among others the question of the Pale. The representatives of the *Bloc* urged the necessity of abolishing the Pale and of giving the Jews full freedom to reside wherever they liked in Russia; and when the Minister of the Interior expressed his fear lest such a measure should lead to anti Jewish pogroms, the representatives of the *Bloc* retorted that, as far as they were concerned, no such fears can enter their minds because from the experience of the past they know that pogroms take place only when the authorities take an active part in them.‡

Whatever the importance of the Circular, it should be borne in mind that in a bureaucratic country like Russia the measure of any reform is not so much its published text as its actual application, which depends chiefly upon the willingness of the local authorities to give effect to the reform, and upon the "explanations" and "interpretations" which the central authorities may subsequently make, and which very often modify the reform to such an extent that almost nothing is left of it.

In many provinces the local authorities refused to apply the new Circular. Thus, for instance, Jewish manufacturers who wished to remove their plant

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* See minutes of Cabinet Council held on August 17 and published in the Russian papers on August 21 (September 3), 1915.

† The Progressive Bloc, which commands an overwhelming majority in the Duma, was formed on September 4, 1915, and consists of the following parties: Centre, Progressive Nationalists (both reactionary), Octobrists, Zemstvo-Octobrists (both Conservative), Progressists (the party of the big manufacturers, mineowners, etc.—on the whole Liberal), and the Constitutional Democratic Party (Liberal and Radical). A common platform was drawn up, the first plank of which is the demand that a Government should be established enjoying the confidence of the country.

‡ See "Retch," August 29 (September 11), 1915.

from the Pale to the Caucasus were refused permission by the local authorities to settle there. When representations upon the matter were made to the Minister of the Interior, the latter "explained" that, although the Circular covered the Caucasus, the local authorities there were within their right to refuse them the permission asked for, because the Circular would not be binding upon them unless they received instructions to this effect from the Viceroy of the Caucasus.*

In consequence of this "explanation" the Caucasus is virtually closed to the Jews in spite of the Circular.†

Kieff, Taganrog, and several other towns were equally closed to the Jews in the same ways.

And this is only a beginning. . .

See "Retch," September 26/October 3, 1915.

* Since the above was in print the papers have brought the news that the Grand Duke Nicolas, Viceroy of the Caucasus, had not only prohibited the application of the Government's Circular in the Caucasus, but that he had furthermore given the order to expel all Jewish fugitives already in the Caucasus, without any exception being made even in the case of Jews who by law have the right to reside outside the Pale.—"Retch," October 18/31, 1915).

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